



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
ADAM J. BELLO
MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

For Immediate Release

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

**MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO ANNOUNCES
PLAN TO PROVIDE HIGH-SPEED INTERNET SERVICES TO RURAL
AND UNDERSERVED AREAS OF THE COUNTY**

County to invest up to \$6 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding to construct wired internet connections to unserved homes/businesses in rural communities and establish a wireless community broadband network in portions of Rochester.

ROCHESTER, NY — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello today announced an unprecedented investment of county American Rescue Plan Act dollars to expand access to broadband internet services in rural communities and the City of Rochester. The initiative, which will be introduced to the County Legislature via referral in the November cycle, provides up to \$1.8 million to Spectrum Networks to install wire line connections for hundreds of currently unconnected rural homes and businesses and up to \$4.2 million with Community Broadband Networks – FLX to install a wireless community broadband network throughout ZIP codes 14604, 14605, 14608, 14611, 14613, 14614 and 14621 in Rochester.

“Access to quality broadband internet is a necessity — not a luxury — and is as critical to the future of our community’s growth as indoor plumbing, electricity and paved roads,” **said County Executive Bello**. “This proposed partnership was sparked by recommendations made by the Monroe County Advisory Task Force on Broadband and will help ensure more County residents have access to the tools they need to successfully and fully participate in modern daily life.”

According to U.S. Census data, nearly two out of every 10 city households and three out of every 10 rural households don’t have internet subscriptions.

“This critical funding targets some of the poorest ZIP codes in all of New York State, and provides an important resource for those living in disadvantaged neighborhoods, reducing isolation and connecting people to the opportunities that continue to migrate to the internet,” **said Mayor Malik D. Evans**. “Our residents need access to job postings, educational links, online forms, and the ability to get information quickly and easily. Participating fully in society increasingly hinges on wireless broadband, and providing that connection is key to delivering hope and creating opportunity for everyone.”

In January, County Executive Bello released results of Magellan Advisors’ study of internet service in low income and rural areas of Monroe County. The study, done at the behest of the Broadband Advisory Task Force, recommended the county partner with private internet service

providers to subsidize buildout of broadband infrastructure in rural and underserved communities.

"As a lifetime resident of Riga and County Legislator representing our rural communities, I know first-hand the need for expansion of high-speed broadband internet into our neighborhoods and farmlands that currently lack this basic necessity," **said County Legislature Majority Leader Steve Brew**. "Today's announcement is truly life-changing for our residents without this access and is the compilation of years of work from countless individuals including Wheatland Town Supervisor Linda Dobson, fellow Legislator Jackie Smith, fellow members of the Broadband Task Force and so many others. I cannot wait to see what the future holds for our community, farmers, and neighbors with reliable, high-speed broadband internet - the possibilities are truly limitless."

Under County Executive Bello's proposal, Spectrum will reach out to the hundreds of homes and businesses that lack wire line access to internet services and then with permission from the home or business owners, install those vital connections. Areas covered under the Spectrum plan include Hamlin, Clarkson, Sweden, Parma, Riga, Wheatland, Ogden, Rush, Mendon, and Penfield.

The CBN –FLX system to be installed mirrors the fixed wireless access technology Surge Link program the company is now rolling out in Syracuse. This technology uses radio frequencies instead of cables to provide low-cost, high-quality broadband service.

"Providing high-speed internet to undeserved communities is essential for bridging the digital divide and ensuring equal opportunities for all," **said Monroe County Legislator William Burgess**. "This collaborative shows the passion for an inclusive, people-first initiative that will empower all the County's residents. I'm proud to support this work to get more of our community connected."

These projects were selected as part of Bring Monroe Back, Monroe County's plan that will utilize federal funds received through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Through the efforts of Congressman Joseph D. Morelle, and Senators Charles Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, Monroe County is the recipient of \$144,080,127 in local fiscal recovery funds.

"Access to reliable, fast internet service is no longer a luxury, but a necessity," **said U.S. Senator Charles Schumer**. "I fought hard to secure funds for local governments in the American Rescue Plan Act and I commend County Executive Bello for using these funds to target underserved areas in the City of Rochester and rural areas across Monroe County for access to fast internet service. This access is vital for homeowners and businesses and health care and education, giving them the resources they need to strengthen their communities and succeed in the modern economy."

"Limited access to reliable high-speed internet makes it harder for kids to do their homework, for seniors to access telehealth appointments, and for workers to take advantage of remote employment opportunities," **said U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand**. "High-quality internet is no longer a luxury – it is a necessity for everyday life. This critical investment will expand broadband service to rural and underserved communities and improve quality of life across Monroe County. I'm proud to have secured this funding through the American Rescue Plan, and I applaud County Executive Bello and the Monroe

County Legislature for this important step toward closing the digital divide once and for all.”

“Internet access is clearly a necessity in today’s world, and expanding broadband service to rural and underserved communities must be a priority,” **said Congressman Joe Morelle**. “I’m proud to have helped deliver this funding, and extremely grateful for County Executive Bello’s continued leadership on this issue. By spearheading this expansion, he is giving more families the tools they need to succeed and opening the door to limitless possibilities for everyone who calls Monroe County home.”

While the ARPA funding will provide for installing the wireless network and providing rural homes and businesses with wired internet connections, the county funding will not pay for any individual’s internet service.

However, in both cases — rural areas and in Rochester — income-qualified households can receive discounts through the federal Affordable Connectivity Program of up to \$30 per month on their internet service as well as a discount of up to \$100 for a one-time purchase of a computer, laptop or tablet. Both Spectrum and CBN-FLX offer a \$30 tier of high-speed internet service of up to 100 megabits per second.

For more information about the ACP program or to check your eligibility, visit getinternet.gov or call (877) 384-2572.

The broadband expansion aligns with recommendations from the [Commission on Racial and Structural Equity \(RASE\)](#), an organization convened in 2020 by the City of Rochester and Monroe County to review local city and county laws, policies and ordinances to identify areas of structural inequity and recommend ways to change those laws/policies to achieve fair application for all citizens.

—30—



Media inquiries:

Gary Walker, Director of Communications
GaryWalker@MonroeCounty.gov
(585) 753-1064

Meaghan M. McDermott, Deputy Director of Communications
MeaghanMcDermott@MonroeCounty.gov
(585) 469-4365